

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Session Plan

Fear

First Universalist Church Unitarian Universalist, Auburn, ME, Rev. Glenn Turner,
April 2019

OPENING WORDS AND CHALICE LIGHTING

“The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown”

— H.P. Lovecraft

Keep walking, though there's no place to get to.

Don't try to see through the distances.

That's not for human beings. Move within,

but don't move the way fear makes you move.”

— Rumi, *The Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*

MOMENTS OF MEDITATION/REFLECTION

CHECK-IN

FOCUS: “FEAR”

After the mass shooting of Muslims in New Zealand, a colleague from Australia emailed me saying he was scheduled to preach at the UU Fellowship in Brisbane. Australians were shaken. What could/should he say? There are things that can be done. Australians have subsequently voted for stricter gun laws, though nothing is fool-proof. But, what about our feelings? What came to mind, for me, was “fear.”

And, so many people have had to cope with the fear of gun violence over the years: Littleton, Sandy Hook, Parkland, the Tree of Life Synagogue. But it's not just shootings that inspire or should inspire fear. There are all the ramifications of global warming: oceans rising, loss of insect life, urban fires, intensifying storms. There are political and health worries: attempts at shrinking the safety-net, lax regulations of pollutants. For refugees fleeing for a better life, families being separated and placed in detention sites, how do they deal with their fears? How do we deal with our fears about America becoming a more hateful nation?

How do we react, how do we cope with the crises we face? Sadness, anger, depression, denial, head-in-the sand, avoidance, withdrawal, despair, anxiety? How do you deal with your fears?

I remember the stoic response of the fictional Dr. Rieux in Albert Camus' novel *The Plague*. The plague seemed to engulf everyone in the area and there was panic and fear as it spread. Dr. Rieux stayed working at the hospital. He said: "All I maintain is that on this earth there are pestilences and there are victims, and it's up to us, so far as possible, not to join forces with the pestilences.”

DISCUSSION:

What do you fear most?

How do you deal with your fears?

If you had to address people dealing with these terrible situations, what would you say?

LIKES AND WISHES

CLOSING WORDS:

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— Rumi, *The Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*

— Albert Camus, *The Plague*